

Academic

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Cultural studies should be a deliberate site of sustained and sustainable struggle. At a time when our institutions—public and private alike—are increasingly co-opted by corporate interests and neoliberal regimes of power, resistance is not enough. We must go beyond critiquing what exists and imagine and enact new forms of knowledge production and intellectual community that directly challenge the exclusionary binaries through which the university defines itself. Distinctions between student and professor, academic and non-academic, theory and practice, knowledge-producer and knowledge-consumer—these binaries foreclose possibilities for opening up potentially liberatory educational spaces, for engaging with community-based knowledges and for hacking futures beyond the privatizing logic of the neoliberal state.

So let it be known:

Cultural studies refuses to privilege research that is apolitical, ahistorical, elitist, immaterial, heteronormative, homonormative, generally normative, ostensibly objective, or otherwise invested in the idea of “pure knowledge” (whatever that means). Rather than trying to speak for those on the margins, cultural studies provides a space of intellectual collaboration and genuine dialogue with those communities that have been systematically denied access to the university—working class, queer and differently-abled communities and communities of color. Instead of defining the “academic” in opposition to the “real world,” cultural studies recognizes that academic work must respond to the “real world” and provide concrete tools for negotiating and understanding the uneven formations of power underlying its structural inequalities.

So let it be known:

Cultural studies is an epistemology of struggle. Knowledge is inseparable from the material and ideological conditions from which it emerges, but those conditions, in turn, are shaped and reinforced by the research produced within the university. By providing critical tools for mapping out existing formations of power, cultural studies speaks to the needs and experiences of our communities. Far from abstract, theory provides a concrete means of resistance and possibility.

So let it be known:

Cultural studies is a weapon for identifying and tearing down institutional formations of power that are racist, elitist, ablest, patriarchal, and homophobic in nature. So I call upon everybody in this room to take up knowledge production as a site of struggle intimately tied to the struggles being waged in the streets and in the workplace, in agricultural fields and in prison cells. Our work begins right here, right now, in spaces like this. Another university is possible.